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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 DILI 000234

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SECSTATE FOR EAP/MTS
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AS](#) [PO](#) [ID](#) [TT](#)
SUBJECT: EAST TIMOR PRESIDENT RAMOS HORTA LOOKS AHEAD

REF: A) DILI 232, B) DILI 218, C) DILI 33, D) JAKARTA 1618

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CLASSIFIED BY: Henry M. Rector, Charge d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy,
Dili, East Timor, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a June 20 meeting with Charge and Poloff, East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta expressed satisfaction with the ongoing parliamentary election campaign and confidence in connection with various post-election political scenarios. He confirmed that he had requested that the International Stabilization Force (ISF) suspend its search for renegade F-FDTL Major Alfredo Reinado. Ramos-Horta claimed that Reinado's supporters were deserting him and reiterated his plan for resolving the petitioner issue. On national security, Ramos-Horta said that as President, he intended to dominate foreign and defense policy, and that he would not necessarily be bound by the "Force 2020" white paper on the modernization of the Timorese Armed Forces (F-FDTL). He said he wanted to intensify cooperation with Australia, which was East Timor's natural partner in national security matters. Ramos-Horta said he would welcome any USG assistance to the National Police (PNTL) and in counter-terrorism. He was dismissive of UNMIT's efforts to complete the investigations of 1999 cases left unfinished by the UN Serious Crimes Unit when it closed in 2004, saying that these resources should instead be focused on strengthening the justice sector overall and that he would not permit East Timor's bilateral relationship with Indonesia to be disrupted by this issue. Ramos-Horta's comments on the new amnesty law have been reported ref A. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Charge and poloff met June 20 with President Jose Ramos-Horta. This was Mission's first meeting with Ramos-Horta since he assumed the Presidency on May 20. The President thanked us for our invitation to our Fourth of July reception, and readily agreed to make a short speech at the event.

Campaign On Track

13. (SBU) Ramos-Horta said he was generally satisfied with the conduct of the parliamentary election campaign so far. He said that the June 3 incident in Viqueque (ref A) had shocked people, and the parties were now exercising caution in order to avoid further problems. Such disturbances as had occurred since June 3 were mostly rooted in long-standing local disputes and were not really related to the national campaign. Recent incidents in Ermera district which resulted in the arrival of news IDPs in Dili, for instance, arose from long-standing local conflicts involving land disputes and local power struggles. Friction in the Uatolare area of Viqueque district, he said, went back more than 50 years, describing the population there as "really nuts". Hard-line FRETILIN elements there, he said, were out of sync with the national party.

14. (SBU) We asked Ramos-Horta how he envisioned the government formation process following the elections. He replied that there was some ambiguity in the constitution, and that he would seek legal advice on the question of whether a majority coalition appointed to form a government had to be in place before the elections, or could result from post-election negotiations. (Note: Legal experts with IFES insist that the constitution clearly allows for post election alliances, as distinct from the pre-election coalitions allowed under the election law.) He said that he intended at any rate to call the party that received the most votes. There were two most likely scenarios, he said. In the first, FRETILIN would win with a slim plurality and would attempt to build a coalition with other parties. This would be difficult because of the antipathy FRETILIN has created. In the second scenario, the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction (CNRT) would form a coalition with other opposition parties. He said that FRETILIN had been humbled by what "can only be called a debacle" in the April-May Presidential elections, and noted that former PM Alkatiri had said he would accept an opposition role if FRETILIN failed to secure a majority, even if it was the largest party.

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14. (C) Ramos-Horta said that he had urged former President Xanana Gusmao, President of the CNRT, to retain some figures from the FRETILIN government with technical knowledge in order to manage the bureaucracy. Ramos-Horta cited Health Minister Rui Araujo in this regard, adding that he should continue as Deputy Prime Minister. Charge recalled that a recent report by the International Crisis Group had said that the FRETILIN government had capably managed some crucial technical matters such the petroleum negotiations. Ramos-Horta riposted that the ICG had given FRETILIN too much credit on this score, and that many of the FRETILIN ministers were "totally incompetent." East Timor, he said, had relied heavily on foreign advisors on such matters and would continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

A Timorese De Gaulle

15. (C) Looking forward to the remainder of his Presidency, Ramos-Horta commented that his predecessor, Xanana Gusmao, had let constitutional constraints limit his powers too stringently. Ramos-Horta said he envisioned his office, like the French presidency, as a full partner to government. Ramos-Horta said he intended to conduct a full review of foreign and defense policy shortly after the new government is in place and had just advised F-FDTL Commander Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak to that effect. He would not, he said, feel bound by the Force 2020 white paper (ref B), which was developed with Portuguese input. Australia, Ramos-Horta said, was East Timor's natural partner in security issues. Portugal was too small, too distant, and its commitments to East Timor's security were not sustainable, whereas Australia had one of the best military forces in the world and a clear long-term interest in a secure East Timor, particularly in regard to maritime affairs. Current Portuguese involvement in East Timor's national security affairs was the doing of "that lunatic," former Defense Minister Roque Rodriguez, Ramos-Horta said. Portuguese assistance was more

welcome in the areas of education, health, and strengthening the judiciary.

U.S. Help Wanted For PNTL, CT

¶6. (C) Charge said that the USG was also looking to assist East Timor's national security institutions wherever possible. Ramos-Horta said that although there were good individual police officers, the PNTL was "really rotten" and needed all the help it could get. He said that East Timor's intelligence service was useless, capable only of passing on gossip and rumors. Ramos-Horta stressed at some length his concern that East Timor presented a soft target for terrorists operating in the region. He recalled a meeting with then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz on this issue that had led to a senior U.S. expert being dispatched to Dili. He said that he would welcome further U.S. engagement on this area.

Search For Reinado On Hiatus

¶7. (C) Charge asked about media reports that Ramos-Horta had called on the Australian and New Zealand International Stabilization Force (ISF) to suspend its search for rebel F-FDTL leader Alfredo Reinado. Ramos-Horta confirmed that he had done so in a June 18 meeting with UNMIT SRSR Atul Khare and in a subsequent discussion with ISF Commander Brigadier Rerden. He had done so, he said, in order to call Reinado on his offer to turn himself in if ISF operations were ended.

¶8. (C) Ramos-Horta asserted that Reinado's supporters were deserting him, and said his strategy was to isolate Reinado from his support base while simultaneously negotiating with him for his surrender. Ramos-Horta discussed his meeting with a group of Reinado's men, including Garcia and Susar as well as some petitioners, in Same over the previous weekend, saying that they were disillusioned with Reinado. He said that they conducted a symbolic handover of one HK-33 rifle to the Prosecutor General who accompanied Ramos-Horta to Same, and that this would be followed up with a group of 15 or so of Reinado's men presenting themselves and their weapons in Dili shortly. He added that Reinado had called him for the first time in months over the

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weekend and that he had been shocked when Ramos-Horta provided detailed information on his recent movements. Ramos-Horta said he now received such information from western youths who were formerly supporters, a further indication of Reinado's decline. He also said that Reinado's claim to be the commander of the petitioners had been shown to be false, and that petitioner spokesperson Gustavo Salsinha no longer had wide support among the petitioner group, who he emphasized must be dealt with as individuals only. Salsinha has requested to meet with him and he has told his staff to make the arrangements. (Note: Our sources indicate that Susar et al are still allied with Reinado, and that those petitioners who still identify themselves as such still regard Salsinha and Reinado as their leaders.)

¶9. (C) Ramos-Horta went on to say that he was looking into a variety of incentives for petitioners who decided to return, including offers of contract work in Korea, separation with three years' salary, reintegration into the F-FDTL under certain conditions, etc. The petitioners would also receive a formal apology from the F-FDTL leaderships for its actions prior to and during the April-May 2006 crisis. Once he had negotiated a package acceptable to the petitioners, Ramos-Horta said, he would ask for the endorsement of the political parties, the Church, and the international community. Ramos-Horta claims to have F-FDTL buy in for this approach. (Note: This is the same package that he has been promoting to resolve the petitioner issue for a while. Our understanding is that F-FDTL opposition to any reintegration remains the key obstacle.)

Time For IDPs To Clear Out

¶10. (SBU) We asked for Ramos-Horta's assessment of the continuing problem of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in camps around Dili. He said that this was a pressing matter for after the elections. Thousands, he said, are in reality squatters who face no real security threat, take advantage of food distributions in the camps, and return to their old homes on the weekend. The camps are now a breeding ground for gang-related activity, he said. Ramos-Horta said he had recently met with UNMIT and the Ministry of Labor on this issue. After the elections, he said, he will to develop a plan to deal with the gang problem in the camps and get IDPs who are no longer in danger back to their homes.

Jakarta Ties Trump SCU Investigations

¶11. (C) We asked for the President's views on UNMIT's efforts to complete the investigations of the Serious Crimes Unit. Ramos-Horta replied that the UN's resources would be better devoted to strengthening East Timor's judicial system. East Timor, he stressed, must maintain good relations with Indonesia, which had been remarkably accepting East Timor's independence since 2002. Any Timorese support for attempts to create a special tribunal for these crimes would wreck this excellent bilateral relationship that has been established so far and would strengthen the hand of hard-line nationalist and Islamist opponents of President Yudhoyono in Jakarta. East Timor, Ramos-Horta said, should not take these good relations for granted. Recalling his recent visit to Jakarta (ref D), he contrasted the warm welcome he had received with the case of France and Algeria. Algeria, he said, had been independent for thirty years before it became possible for Presidents Chirac and Bouteflika to exchange visits.

¶12. (C) Warming to his historical theme, Ramos-Horta said that East Timor must put past resentments behind it and look toward the future. There was ample blame on all sides for the country's misfortunes in the pre-independence years. He said he bore the U.S. no ill-will for allegedly having "given the green light" for Indonesia to intervene in 1975. Following the fall of Saigon, Ramos-Horta said, the Soviet Union, embracing the Brezhnev doctrine, was supporting Communist movements in the Third World, and the Vietnamese government had openly stated its intention to liberate Southeast Asia. The United States, Ramos-Horta said, had therefore had good reason to believe that Communism was on the rise at that time, and the Timorese people were in fact lucky to have been spared Communist rule.

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Ramos-Horta said that the various Timorese factions had themselves invited disaster by escalating the political conflict into outright civil war in 1974-75. "Our stupid students who came back from Lisbon and spread Marxist revolutionary ideas," were also culpable, Ramos-Horta said.

Comment

¶13. (C) Ramos-Horta's ambiguity regarding how he will proceed with the government formation process is somewhat worrying. It is possible that he is simply being evasive regarding how he intends to proceed. However, if he indeed is unclear on the constitutional options and how he will address the potential for conflicting claims to the right to form a government, this could contribute to a difficult post-election process. Ramos-Horta's insistence that he will take the lead on security and foreign policy issues is of note and may put him at odds with Xanana Gusmao should the latter become Prime Minister. Gusmao has particularly emphasized the need to reform the F-FDTL and the PNTL as key reasons for his establishment of the CNRT party and post assesses that he is unlikely to leave security issues to Ramos-Horta. Finally, it is also important to note that Ramos-Horta's claims regarding progress on both the Reinado and petitioner issues are very familiar and repeated themes that have yet to bear fruit. Post believes he may be overstating the

extent of splintering among both Reinado's men and the petitioners. Moreover, his insistence that he has convinced F-FDTL leadership to accept his proposal for the petitioners does not match with our most recent information that the F-FDTL leadership remains adamantly opposed to any petitioners returning to their ranks. End comment.
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